DETROIT DISTRICT
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
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DECEMBER 2015 GREAT LAKES WATER LEVEL SUMMARY

LAKE SUPERIOR

This December marked the first time in the period of record (1918-2014) that Lake Superior ended the month at higher levels than it started. This was the result of record high December net basin supply due to the combined influence of very high precipitation and runoff to the lake and lower than average overlake evaporation. The mean December water level was 602.33 ft, which is nearly the same level of one year ago, 7 inches higher than the long term average December level, and nearly one half inch higher than the November 2015 monthly mean level. The December level was 15 inches higher than chart datum. Lake Superior is projected to be near last year's level through March, and then fall to 3 inches below last year's level by June. Water levels are forecast fall from 9 to 5 inches above long term average from January to June.

LAKE MICHIGAN-HURON

Lake Michigan-Huron also experienced record high December net basin supply, a result of above average precipitation and runoff and below average evaporation. Consequently, Lake Michigan-Huron ended the month at higher levels than it started, and its monthly mean December level, 579.23 ft, was nearly one half inch above its November level. The mean December level was 21 inches above chart datum, 1 inch above last year's level, and 9 inches above the long term average December level. The 6-month forecast calls for Lake Michigan-Huron levels to be 2 to 6 inches above last year's level, 21 to 28 inches above chart datum, and 11 inches above long term average through June.

LAKE ST. CLAIR

Lake St. Clair rose nearly one inch over the month of December. The monthly mean Lake St. Clair level was 574.54 ft. The mean December level was the same as the mean December 2014 level and 9 inches above the long term average December level. The forecast calls for Lake St. Clair to be as much as 17 inches higher than last year's level in February, partly due to the fact that in 2014, Lake St. Clair's winter levels fell dramatically due to ice in the St. Clair River. By June, however, the lake is forecast to be just one inch above last year's level.

LAKE ERIE

Although Lake Erie finished December nearly 1 inch higher than it started, the mean December level, 571.59 ft, was 2 inches below the mean November level. Lake Erie received 7% more than average December precipitation, with the majority of precipitation falling during the last 6 days of the month. Net basin supply to Lake Erie was slightly above average. The forecast calls for Lake Erie to rise 16 inches from its mean December level over the next 6 months. The mean March level is expected to be 15 inches above last March's level, partly due to the fact that in 2014, winter levels on Lake Erie fell substantially due to ice in the St. Clair and Detroit River system. By June, however, the lake is forecast to be just 2 inches higher than it was in 2014.

LAKE ONTARIO

Lake Ontario's mean December level, 244.32 ft, was almost 4 inches below its mean November level. Lake Ontario received close to average December precipitation, but net basin supply to Lake Ontario was above average, likely due to less-than-average evaporation. Lake Ontario is projected to be up to 13 inches above last year's level in March, but within an inch of 2014 levels by June. The forecast calls for levels to be within 2 inches of long term average levels throughout the 6-month forecast period.